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MRS. PENELOPE'S ELOPEMENT

KATE H. SAWYER

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MISS PENELOPE'S ELOPEMENT

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

KATE H. SAWYER

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CONTENTS.

PAGE

Miss Penelope's Elopement..... 7

Uncle Jeff's House..... 26

Deputy Sheriff..... 36

Bob's Trip Abroad..... 55

The Embodiment of a Thought..... 63

Mrs. Brown..... 76

Miss Scruggs..... 84

Aunt Sallie's Psychology..... 93

MISS PENELOPE'S ELOPEMENT

AND OTHER STORIES

Miss Penelope's Elopement

It created a great sensation in the village, for it was reported that she was a woman of means, and it was positively known that she had red hair and also a mole on the side of her nose; but nevertheless it really happened, and this is how it occurred.

The morning after her arrival at Hope Villa, Miss Penelope looked about her room for the bell, but she did not see it (nor could anyone else), so she thrust her feet into her slippers with rising wrath. "Serves me right," she muttered, "for coming to a quiet private family." Then she opened a space an inch wide in her doorway and, not seeing anybody, flung

it wider still, deposited her pitcher on the hall floor with a decided bang and went back to bed to await developments.

After a few minutes a very vicious little bell downstairs rang vigorously. The rising bell of Hope Villa was evidently accustomed to opposition and rebellion from the boarders, and insisted upon being heard. Finally the pitcher at the door moved. Miss Penelope called out "Come in," in a very commanding tone, but nothing entered. Then she bestirred herself to give chase to the retreating maid and beg for hot water; but upon opening the door she saw nothing except the pitcher, now filled.

"This is really very promising," she thought. "I want hot water and if this roof has to come down, I'll get some."

Whereupon she glanced around for a weapon of war and decided upon an umbrella, with which she pounded on the floor loudly. This unusual noise brought a prompt response. "Please, ma'am," said a very meek little voice, in reply to her request, "there's been right

smart calls for hot water, and I'm afraid I can't bring you much."

The old lady looked down upon a little, freckled face, a mop of sunny curls and a pair of eyes with a hunted look in their brown depths.

"Are you one of Mr. Hope's boys?" she asked.

"Nome, I'm just Jim," and with a couple of bounds he disappeared down the stairs, returning in two minutes with a pint of hot water, which he offered apologetically.

She was detained that morning a little longer than usual, owing to the dismemberment of two overgrown hairpins on each side of her brow, from a few scant red and gray hairs, so she missed the diversion of family prayers, but she reached the dining-room in time to hear grace and was given a seat by Mrs. Hope, and flanked on the other side by a row of growing Hopes, who were well-trained children, never asking for anything twice. Their good manners, however, had no visible effect upon

the hardened boarders, who made onslaughts on the passing provisions whenever an opportunity offered.

After a few minutes Jim came in with a plate of cakes, his small figure enveloped in a butler's apron which came down to his ten-year-old heels. He waited with great gravity, in spite of a good many giggles coming from the children and a multiplicity of directions from the older members of the family. The cook also gave him orders which were distinctly audible through the half-open door.

"Go 'long, Jim! Don't you spill dat gravy. Run 'long, chile. Dem town folks eat faster'n I kin cook."

Agatha, the eldest daughter of the house and by common consent the general manager, would in crowded moments, get up from her seat at table to assist, taking the helm always at dinner; but at breakfast Jim waited very well without her.

"I'm afraid, Miss Ware, you will find it very lonely in our little town," Mrs. Hope re-

marked to her new guest. "We have never been in touch with our neighbors. These Virginia provincials are very thriftless and uninteresting, and but for the climate, which agrees with me, we would have returned to Maine long ago. It is a great cross to my daughters to be so far from Boston," she added, with a society sigh.

The daughters, remembering the one occasion when they had passed through that city on their way to this mountain fastness from their fifty acres of stony soil, sighed also with regret, and one of the boarders took this opportunity of making a dash at the butter-plate, which Jim had left in an unfortified position on the table. Agatha's sweeping eye warned him of his carelessness, and he immediately moved it back to the sideboard.

When the meal was over Miss Penelope took her embroidery to the hall and seated herself between the open doors to enjoy the breeze. She was soon disturbed by Jim, who, divested now of his apron and shoes, appeared with a

large pail of something greasy and a floor cloth.

"Please, ma'am," he said, "would you mind setting on the porch while I wipe up the hall? I'll move your chair out there."

"Certainly, my boy, certainly," the old lady answered, bustling up and arranging herself near the seat of operation.

He oiled and rubbed and rubbed and oiled, until Agatha came and pronounced it properly done, except for a certain doubtful corner behind the stairway which must be attended to.

"Make haste, Jim," she said, "and as soon as you finish washing off the back porch, go after your vegetables, before it gets too warm."

Quite by accident, half an hour later, Miss Penelope stood looking over the garden fence at the little figure, which was almost hidden by a large basket and a tattered straw hat; going in and out of the corn rows, stooping over the tomato vines, hunting for cucumbers under the fresh green leaves, snapping off the summer squash with a case-knife and afterward dig-

ging out the new potatoes and shaking the earth from them.

"My goodness," she muttered, "what will they give him to do next? What a beautiful garden you have, Miss Hope," she went on in an altered tone to Agatha, who suddenly emerged from the shrubbery, which had made a convenient watch-tower to overlook the vegetable gatherer; "it must take a great deal of work to keep it so thoroughly weeded."

"Yes, it does," replied the girl. "Father works it himself, getting up every morning at five. He has nobody to help him except Jim, who is too small to really be of service."

"Humph!" was the polite response. "He seems to do a good deal for such a little fellow. I should think you'd be afraid he would stop growing." Agatha opened her gray eyes very widely and stared at the new boarder with surprise. Then she tripped lightly down the path, and helping Jim with the basket, they disappeared in the kitchen.

Miss Penelope sat down on the garden bench

with a spirit of war in her attitude and fanned herself with her embroidery hoop.

"Why can't that poor little chap play with the other children?" she thought, glancing toward the little Hopes, who were rolling over in the grass with the puppies and screaming with pretended fright at their baby bites and yaps. "He must be a poor relation," she decided.

Just then the object of her interest came out of the kitchen with a large tin pan of apples and, seating himself cross-legged under a tree, began to pare them. His eyes wandered over to the children occasionally and, becoming interested in their movements, his knife went very slowly around the apples. Finally it seemed to stick hopelessly in one, and in another moment Jim had dropped it and was in the midst of the children, who greeted him with shouts of delight.

The big, red rooster came from under the rosebush and, observing the pan, clucked to the hens and they held a reception in it.

"Shoo! shoo!" screamed Agatha from the doorway. "Here, Jim, where are you? Upon my soul, you are a torment. Come here this minute and get some more apples to peel. You needn't walk so slow. You'll catch it, anyhow. Take that—and that," planting two smart slaps on the sunburnt cheeks.

Here the interfering boarder came forward, gasping: "Don't—please, don't; I can't stand it. He is such a little fellow; you ought not to expect too much of him." Agatha was more than surprised, but she held her ground.

"Really, Miss Ware," she replied, "you do not understand the case at all and may therefore be pardoned for your interference." Then she turned to the culprit. "Go to work, Jim, and remember that it is quite impossible for you to pay for your living with the little work you do, and the least you can do is to be grateful and not spend your time in play."

Jim wiped his eyes on the back of his hand, took up his pan and went to the orchard, but not without throwing a glance of gratitude

toward his defender, who immediately retired to her room and had recourse to her lavender salts, while she pondered over certain matters with sundry sniffs. During the rest of the day she spent her time in trying to arrange an interview with Jim, but he was engaged; and though she followed him to the wood-pile while he picked up enough chips to last through Sunday, the opportunity was not ripe, for Mrs. Hope was on the back porch knitting. She could only keep her eye on him while he caught the chickens, for his little brown legs were too fleet for her to follow, and at last, when the most rebellious pullet was drawn triumphantly from the depths of the box-bush, the work of killing and picking had to take place behind the woodshed; and Miss Penelope's feelings were too tender to witness this operation, so she decided to wait until the next day.

Sunday morning it was raining a little, but that did not interfere with going to church, for, by cutting across lots and going through the pasture, the distance was short and the

boarders were bored. Church in the country is an interesting place—the first time—and the old lady took a prominent seat near the "mourners' bench." Jim sat in front of her, by Mrs. Hope and the children, while Mr. Hope occupied a position on the opposite side of the church, on one of the benches reserved for men only, where a plug of tobacco could be indulged in without restraint.

After a long sermon on card-playing and dancing, the preacher settled his blue necktie, took a drink of water and asked Brother Hope to lead in prayer, a request which was followed by some loud and rambling instructions to the Lord by the brother, who wound up by asking that the hard hearts of the congregation might be turned in the direction of missions and made to contribute accordingly. The collection was then taken up by one of the younger brothers of the parish, who wore muddy top boots, with a riding switch sticking coquettishly out of one.

By craning her neck a little Miss Penelope

could see that Jim held up a quarter and looked at it wistfully as the hat approached, but after a glance from Mrs. Hope dropped it in.

The maiden lady squirmed with curiosity. What on earth could this mean? The mystery was solved a little later, however, when they started home, for she heard Agatha say:

"Jim, did you put your money in?"

"Yes'm," was the reply.

"That's a good boy. You know you have everything you need and it is right to want the poor heathen taught the Gospel."

"Yes'm."

"And the Sallie Hope Mission is to my mind the most interesting and deserving one that we can help."

"Yes'm."

"Have you any more money that the boarders have given you?"

No answer.

"Have you any more money, I asked you, Jim?"

"Nome," very slowly.

"I believe you have and I hope it will be no pleasure to you if you are keeping it from the Mission."

Here Miss Penelope came too near, and the conversation was not resumed until they reached the house, when Agatha said:

"You can have this afternoon to yourself, Jim, after you have washed the dishes, but you must not play ball, like you did last Sunday, for mother was terribly hurt to think of any member of her family doing such a thing, and in the front yard, too."

"What is the Sallie Hope Mission?" inquired one of the boarders at the dinner-table, one who doubtless felt keenly the loss of his contribution.

"That is a little mission in Mexico," answered Mrs. Hope, "established and supported by this parish. At present our daughter has charge of it. In fact, we may say she founded it, for she has been teaching there ever since it was started."

"Humph!" grunted Miss Penelope.

After the dish washing Jim wandered about the yard in his Sunday clothes, feeling very uncomfortable and warm, and not knowing what to do with himself. The children were sitting on the front porch, staring at their sisters' visitors. There was nobody to play with, and even the roosters, from some perversity, would not fight. He was tired whittling sticks with his broken-bladed knife, and at intervals he would take a rubber ball out of his most important pocket and then hastily put it back upon a sound of approaching footsteps.

Presently Miss Penelope came to the water bucket on the back porch and unhung the gourd.

"Let me get you some fresh water, ma'am," he called, bounding up the steps and to the well.

"Thank you, my boy," she answered, looking with admiration upon his straight little figure and his shining ringlets, almost baby ringlets they were, clinging to his forehead. "I

should think you would be glad to rest to-day; you have so much to do during the week."

"Yes'm," with an uneasy look around him, then, in a whisper: "Say, I like you. I think you're the prettiest boarder we've got. I told John Hope that, and he laughed and I knocked him down."

"That was gallant, I'm sure, Jim, but I'm afraid to be my champion for beauty would mean a great many fights for you. I want to say something to you, my boy, but I do not wish anyone to hear me. Where can we go?"

A look of awe came over his face. Could it be possible for her to find his mother? "Less go to the stable," he answered promptly. "There ain't nothing there but the new kittens. Horses are in the pasture."

So to the stable they went, and peeped in the loft to get a glimpse of the kittens. "Why who sleeps here?" she asked, her eye falling upon a pallet in one corner, covered with a patchwork quilt.

"Me," was the response. "And I'm glad they

let me sleep out here in the summer, 'cause if I ever get another chance to run away, this is a good place to run from."

"Did you ever run away?"

"Yes'm, I run wunst, but I told a boy next door about it, and he told Mr. Hope, and just as I got to the depot and was going to buy me a ticket Mr. Hope he come up behind me and said, 'Jim, it's time to be home getting up the cows.' And then he whipped me and took my boarders' money and put it in the Mission, so I ain't had another chance since."

"How much money did you have?"

"I had a whole dollar and a half."

"Where were you going to run to?"

"I dunnome, but I was going somewhere on the train 'way from here, for I reckon if I got a start I might find my mother and she would take back the binding."

"What binding? I do not understand what you mean."

"Why, you see she bound me over to Mr. Hope, 'cause she said she didn't have no father

for me, and the man that lived at our house he had some boys already, so she had to give me away; but I think if I could find her and tell her how I want to go away, she might unbind me."

"Did you love your mother?"

"Yes'm, right smartly."

"Do you want to live with her again?"

"Nome."

"Why?"

"'Cause I used to have to hide when she come home from the cross-roads store. She and Unc Tom (that was the man that lived at our house) used to come home drunk and lick all of us."

Then something strange happened to Jim, something which had never occurred before in all his ten years' experience. The boarder threw her arms around his neck, and kissed his round, freckled cheek. She whispered something in his ear, too, which made him jump up and kick his feet together like the crack of a whip, and presently he flew off with

a whoop of joy to call the cows home for milking.

The mountain air seemed to agree much better with Miss Penelope after this. She walked to the post office twice a day, being exceedingly impatient for her mail, and finally, upon receipt of a formidable-looking envelope, bearing a lawyer's name, she decided that a matter of business would take her to the station that afternoon and asked that Jim might drive her.

When the sun went down Agatha grew uneasy, for they had not returned, and Dot and Spot were lowing for him down in the dewy paddock.

The buggy came back, but its only occupant was a little colored boy, who bore a note for Mr. Hope, which read:

"MR. HOPE.

"DEAR SIR: Kindly send my trunks to 1417 Blank Street, Boston. I have brought Jim with me, to see that he is properly cared for. If you want to look him up, I will meet

you half way at any time, and with a man from Maine who wishes to settle a little matter with you concerning a forged check.

"Truly yours, PENELOPE WARE."

Uncle Jeff's House

I WENT down to Uncle Jeff's door one bright Sunday morning in October to see if he would drive us to church. The old man, with his usual hospitality, insisted upon my coming in.

"Dinah, git up out dat char an' let de baby hab it," with which command to his better and larger half, whose exceeding corpulence rendered her movements somewhat slow, he laid his corncob pipe upon the top of the churn and began to stir the smoldering logs in the fireplace.

"Set down, honey, I got suppin' to say ter yer. Cose I'll dribe yall ter chutch, but I ain't studyin' 'bout meetin' now. I'm thinkin' 'bout suppin' else 'sides Sunday close an' preachers. Ole age is a-creepin' on, an' me widout no home o' my own. I wants a tater-patch, honey, an' a house whar b'longs to me,

whar me an' Dinah kin stay all de time widout none o' dis quoilin' wid Ole Marse. Why, dat man gits wuss ebery day! He 'lows I oughtn't ter go to town cote days, an' when I gits pestered wid de misery in my back, he say, 'Jefferson, yer ain't wuth yer salt.' "

Here the old man drew himself up and so perfectly imitated Uncle's fierce manner that I could not help smiling, though this matter of a permanent home for the faithful couple had been a thorn in my flesh for a long time. Uncle was more than willing to give him a few acres of land, but money to build the house was harder to procure, and we had hoped and planned to no purpose.

The lodge which had been assigned them was quite comfortable, but in no way suited to their taste, being just in front of our dwelling, on the edge of the lawn, and had been used by the gate-opener; but the gate having long since crumbled into forgetfulness, there was no need for any opening besides the gap which yawned between the stone posts irregularly piled and

covered with gray lichen, like the sentinel oaks which stood around them.

"I cyant hab no gyardin heah," he resumed discontentedly. "Yall so patentious like, yer say my gyardin would look bad in front de house, an', 'sides dat, I'se ole now an' don' wanter wuk no mo', an' Ole Marse oughter git me a house."

"We know that, Uncle Jeff, and if we had our way you would have had your house long ago." It was Nell who spoke, entering the door, her bright young face filled with sympathy. "You see," she continued, "Uncle is old, too, and he cannot manage like he used to. He hasn't any money just now, but perhaps things will be brighter after a little while."

He shook his head, a perfectly gray head, ornamented by a white wool nightcap worn in all seasons and upon all except very formal occasions, to keep the wind out of his ears.

"I done waited an' waited, baby, an' it 'pears like it don't come. Who dat po' scout heah yestiddy, Miss Nellie? I don' want yer to be

marryin' no po' white trash like dat. I wur a gret mine to tel him to g'long back to whar he come from, when I see him steppin' up de path a-swingin' dat little switch he call a cane whar ain't big enough to kill a tadpole wid, but I seed you a-lookin' out de winder, a-watchin' fur him, all frizzled up an' all smilin', an' I was fred to dribe him back."

"You had better wait until he asks for me before you raise any objections," she answered, flushing to the roots of her golden hair. "He is really a very nice man, Uncle Jeff, when you know him."

"Well, honey, I won't say nothin' if he kin suppote you good, but I don't want my Ole Mistiss whar is deceasted to look down from hebben an' see her pretty chillun a-matin' wid no draggled sparrows. Yall oughter marry condescendin', penevolent, circumscribed young gentmen."

He meant circumspect, but was quite as well pleased with the length of the words he had chosen, and we left him diving into his chest to

resurrect some of his Sunday clothes, a sort of fungus collection of forty years' growth, for he had never been known either to wear out or give away any of these remarkable garments. That day his costume consisted of a pair of large checked blue and white cotton trousers, a spike-tailed broadcloth coat and a silk hat so tall that it threatened to raise the roof from our broken-down carriage.

After that day we renewed our efforts for his house, but Nell's drawings would not sell, and my plain sewing brought but a small revenue, so when December came we felt as far from our object as ever. He had given a reluctant consent to her engagement after a painful interview with Will, which I had felt constrained to hear, so I walked on the other side of the hedge.

He addressed the culprit with great gravity:

"Young man, my little mistiss say she gwine ter marry you, an' I wanter know suppin' 'bout yer 'fo' I lets yer hab my chile. Ever since I been free I been stayin' heah takin' keer

o' dese babies. Dee is had de bes' of eberyting in der lives, but we ain't got much now, 'cause de whole Yankee army walk through dis yard an' ebery man ub 'em done tuk suppin' 'way wid him. Whar is yer plantation?"

"I have none, Uncle Jeff; I live in town," was the meek response.

"Ain't you got any niggers? Whar is yer niggers, suh?"

Again a negative reply.

"Name o' Gawd, man, what *is* yer got?"

Things were becoming so serious that I left, but as Uncle Jeff went to the cross-roads store that evening and was too sick to work for several days after, and as Will seemed to grow in his favor very suddenly, we strongly suspected that bribery and corruption took place on the other side of the hedge.

Christmas Eve, after all the preparations for the next day had been made, I sat upstairs by my fire alone while Nell was saying good night below to her lover, and I seemed to see in the dying embers all the gray, lonely years which

stretched before me. The wind was howling, sighing, rocking the great oaks and swishing their brittle branches against the roof. A cold sleet was falling upon the half-frozen ground and driving in sheets upon the shaking windows. I arose and fastened my scissors between the sashes, hoping to steady them and stop their perpetual ague.

Presently Nell came in, her face radiant, and holding in her hand a small roll of paper. "Look!" she cried, "the specifications of Uncle Jeff's house. It is Will's Christmas gift."

She cried for very joy, and wanted to go immediately to the old man, but it was too late at night, so we went to sleep to dream of his delight next day.

It must have been a couple of hours later when all of us were aroused by a knock at the back door, and as soon as Uncle opened it we heard little Joe's voice. "Please, suh, Aun' Dinah say please some yall come down dar. Unc' Jeff, he got a mighty bad turn."

I threw on my things and telling Nell not to

follow unless I put a light in the lodge window, went downstairs. Uncle found a flask of brandy, murmured something about my taking cold and went back to bed. We were accustomed to these spells and felt no great uneasiness, for the old man generally recovered in a few days after one of his attacks.

"How is he, Joe?" I asked, floundering through the half-frozen puddles. "Is he suffering very much?"

"He sutney is bad off," the child answered, in a scared voice. "Aun' Dinah say he mus' be conjured, 'cause he layin' dar wid he eyes rolled up same ez if he wuz daid."

It took but a few moments to reach the lodge, and before entering I could hear the groans and lamentations from the women who had come in to help, but from Dinah's lips no sound escaped. She sat by the bed as still as the form she so intently watched, her eyes straining with anxiety to discover some sign of encouragement from the impassive features.

We forced a few drops of brandy between

his lips, but he did not swallow it; then I took the candle which was nearly burned to the socket and placed it flickering in the window. The doctor had been sent for, but it seemed he would never come; the moments dragged like hours, while we resorted to everything we could think of to restore consciousness, but without success. The women had ceased to lament and obeyed my directions with awe-stricken faces. Little Joe sat upon an upturned box in the chimney corner and cried softly.

At last there was a faint stir in the bed, and the sufferer opened his eyes slowly, eyes whose heavy lids seemed weighted with the toil of seventy years.

"Dat you, Dinah?" he asked, and his voice was far away.

An eager "Yes, honey," followed by a heart-breaking groan, was the response.

"How come de candle mek sech a light, Dinah? It's mighty bright."

"Oh, 'tis de light o' Gawd whar he sees,"

she sobbed, burying her face in her hands and rocking back and forth.

Just then I looked up and saw Nell standing in the doorway too frightened, too distressed to speak. She tiptoed softly to the bedside, but after looking down into the filmy eyes, she called loudly to him, taking the poor, hard-worked hand in her own:

"Uncle Jeff, your house is going to be built next week. You must wake and listen. It is all yours. Can you hear me? Ah, God!"

It was too late. He had gone home, and to a house not made with hands.

Deputy Sheriff

THREE o'clock on a chilly day late in October, when the sun exerted itself only to be warm in spots, and the cool air strove with its rays to gain the mastery. Through the masses of red and gold foliage glimpses of naked cornstalks appeared on desolate hillsides, in ragged splotches on each side of the red clay road. The dejected rail fences, partially supported by clinging grape vines, disjointedly marked the highway, forsaken save for a solitary horseman riding slowly on, whistling with a little defiance and a touch of sadness "The Bonnie Blue Flag."

His great, square shoulders, covered with a coat long since devoid of color, seemed the only prominence in the landscape except the sharp

outline of the haunches belonging to the gaunt white horse he rode.

From time to time he stooped and looked down into the muddy tracks for some clue to his pathway, and finally, following with his eye a certain footprint, broad, bare, flat, with the indentation of an African instep, plainly marked, he kept it in sight, turning to one side of the road and then halting by a barrier of fencing a trifle higher than the rest and connected by a motley set of draw-bars, which belonged to trees entirely at variance with each other's families.

Here he paused, pushed back his slouch hat and glanced through the skirt of forest oaks toward a clearing beyond, where there stood an old frame house, dilapidated, time-worn and guiltless from its birth of ever having owned a porch, a blind, or a drop of paint.

Perceiving a group of people moving about the yard, he called out, "Hello!" at the top of his healthy lungs, this mode of address being customary in the neighborhood when one called

on business. A man's voice invited him in. He slung himself from the saddle and, slipping the rein over the pommel, pulled down the bars half way and stepped over, leaving his horse to follow.

Between man and beast there seemed a marked affinity; both young but gaunt, strong yet unfinished. In the straight-limbed youth of twenty-one not filled out to his exceeding height, his stern features, deep-set eyes and uncouth appearance, there was something not unlike the raw-boned, Roman-nosed, kind-eyed horse which followed him leisurely up the path, pausing to nibble at a tempting bit of green, then rubbing his tinged lips against his master's coat.

It would have been an interesting spectacle to one unaccustomed to war times and straits, this group of queer figures gathered under a large pear tree in front of the dwelling, for there was something Bohemian in the picture of a large fire at a little distance from the tree, over whose red coals was suspended a huge

iron pot filled with some stewing, frothy substance.

A girl of about thirteen, with sober gray eyes, and wearing a calico sunbonnet pushed back from her face, and a bright scarlet cape, pinked at the edges, stood by this kettle, and, with a long switch, fished leisurely and with a serious air in the boiling compound.

A man stood by her in a checked homespun shirt and a pair of trousers patched to defy recognition of any known material. Home-made shoes of the roughest leather completed his attire, yet there was something in his clearly cut features and in his manner that bore a decided resemblance to a gentleman, and when he spoke there was no doubt left in the listener's mind.

He had just emptied a basket of pears in a heap not far off, and they were being picked over by half a dozen little negroes in various stages of semi-attire.

After pausing to stir the contents of the cauldron with a long wooden paddle, he came for-

ward and greeted courteously the stranger, who approached in a business-like manner and without embarrassment.

"I am riding as deputy sheriff," said the gaunt youth, "and I came by to see if you know anything about a darkey named Tom, who used to belong here."

"No, I do not," replied his host; "but perhaps some of the men may be able to give you some information. Jeff!" he called, to an old man splitting a log at the woodpile, "have you seen anything of Tom to-day?"

The old man put down his axe and came forward, wiping the moisture from his wrinkled face on his ragged sleeve.

"Naw, sah, Mars' John, I ain't seen dat nigger, an' I don' want see no sech runaway niggers as dat. He wuz de only one, suh," turning to the sheriff, "dat wuz mean 'nough to leave po' mist'ess an' de chilluns up heah in dis wilderness to be et up by de Yankees. He wanted to go off wid 'em, an' mist'ess she pack he knapsack, an' she say, 'You go 'long

with 'em, Tom, 'cas' you goin' to be free anyhow. Gen'l Lee, he can't hole out. An' den, arter dat, suh, he tole de enemy whar we is hid, an' de whole Yankee army done come by heah an' tuk eberything we had. Naw, suh, Tom better not come on dis place, 'cas' he'll get kilt sho if he do."

The young deputy eyed the old man kindly and listened rather indifferently to this story. It was only one of many, and here were the people well and evidently not starving.

"What do you want with the boy?" asked the homespun aristocrat.

"He set fire to a barn last night at Macedonia cross-roads, was caught in the very act, but got away and——"

Here the sheriff paused, having become embarrassed by the frightened eyes and white face of the little girl, who had just fished up a pear triumphantly on her switch after much patient angling; but in her anxiety when he spoke had let it fall back in the boiling syrup, and was staring at him with great, troubled eyes.

She left her occupation and, coming straight to him, laid her little, trembling hand upon his arm.

"How do you know that the man who said he saw him told the truth?" she asked, with the air of a judge. "What will you do with him if you catch him?"

What a white, sad face it was for a child; what great, beseeching eyes and what a sensitive baby mouth, yet withal something so womanly about this mite in the red cloak. The sheriff looked down into her face with a benign and wondering air, as if she were the dainty evidence of an unseen and longed-for world.

"There seems little doubt about his having burnt it,' he said, very gently, "but I would not hurt him, you know. He would be taken to jail to await his trial."

"I hope you will never catch him," she said vehemently; and, with the satisfaction of having resisted the laws of her country to her utmost, she returned to her task of watching the

preserves, for such they were called, being button-pears cooking in cane juice.

She successfully pulled out on the end of her switch a few of them, by this time well cooked, and placing them on a cracked earthenware saucer, offered them to the officer of the law, with the gracious air of one accustomed to dispensing hospitalities of a more refined sort. He accepted them with thanks and, leaning against the tree, ate them, and after wiping his fingers on a very ragged but clean handkerchief, set the saucer on a stump and whistled to his horse, which was grazing a few yards off.

"If you are in this neighborhood again, come and see us," said his unstylish host. "We are refugees and know none of our neighbors. My sister's husband is in Richmond at his business, hoping to get them back as soon as possible, and in the meantime I am here protecting them."

The sheriff thanked him and was about to mount his lean steed when the child again left the kettle and came to him.

"If you catch Tom, you must be sure not to hurt him. Promise me that," she added, in a peremptory tone, with the air of one in the habit of being obeyed, the air which the eldest of a large family always carries to the grave.

He smiled. "I promise, and I always keep my word," he said.

He touched lightly with his large hand the flannel cape which fluttered in the wind against his arm, and, vaulting in the saddle, lifted his old slouch hat and was off in a canter until he reached the draw-bars.

Now there is nothing in country life more exasperating than draw-bars, nor is there any other obstacle which can bring a more sudden halt to thought and a break into a day-dream.

The man, thinking of the barn-burner before taking down and putting back the bars, which he did conscientiously, each one in its niche, found himself afterward dwelling upon the people he had met.

"There is something about town people which makes me feel at a disadvantage," he

said to himself. "I don't know just what it is, but I think I'll go to town and stay long enough to find out. There is no use trying to live in the country without teams and money. I'll take my next tobacco crop down to Richmond and look about for something."

Having settled this subject satisfactorily to himself, he struck his spur lightly against his sympathetic companion's side and they cantered down the red road to look for Tom, whom they never found.

After horse and rider had disappeared Janet was immediately surrounded by the anxious horde of small negroes, who had been restrained from demonstration by the presence of a stranger, and now pressed forward to beg their share of preserves.

"Is dey done good yet?"

"Lemme taste?"

"Gord, ain't dat nice!"

"Juno, you got more'n I is."

"Gimme 'nuther, Miss Janet, please, marm," and similar requests. After satisfying her fol-

lowers, she directed her thoughts to other and more weighty matters.

"Uncle John," she asked, "are sheriffs gentlemen?"

Her uncle looked at her for a moment and then replied, "Sometimes, my dear; but why do you ask?"

"Because if he is a gentleman he will keep his word."

* * * * * * *

"But, Janet, why should you shut yourself up like a nun when every other girl of your age is having a glorious time? What if you do have to mind a pack of children all day? You can put them to bed in the evening and go to a party. It has been so long since you have been wearing mourning, you have fallen into these isolated habits, like an old woman. You are nearly nineteen years old, and it is high time you were in society. I am going to speak to your father this very day about the insane way you are being treated."

The speaker, having expressed herself freely, paused to note the effect.

"I do not think I am like other girls, Aunt Alice," her niece replied. "I fancy I would not care much for balls and beaux, and you know the responsibility of the children keeps my mind and hands occupied."

"That is all very well to talk about," responded the matron, loosening her bonnet strings and panting with righteous indignation. "As if I did not know you had a pack of boys always at your heels. If there is anything I hate, it is boys! If girls like attention, let them accept it from men who will not take ten years to grow into something eligible. Now Tuesday evening at the Carys there will be a lot of nice men you ought to know."

"You are very kind, Aunt Alice, to take such an interest in my affairs; but I really must decline being put on the market, and if that is your object in my going to this ball, you may spare yourself further trouble."

"Don't be silly, Janet! You know I am

thinking of your welfare, and you fly at me, and that is all the thanks I get. There is one thing you have to face, child, and that is your father's marriage. He has already waited longer than I expected, and when the other wife comes you will not want to give up your place as general manager. You will sigh for a home of your own."

"And do you think I am base enough to be married for a home?"

"No, no, child, I don't think anything about it," was the inconsistent reply. "I just want you to enjoy yourself like other girls, and you need not be married if you object. All I want is for you to go to the Cary's ball. You will have a glorious time. I heard Sam Fairfield say the other day that no woman could be beautiful without red hair."

"Are you sure he was not joking, Aunt Alice," asked Janet, blushing to match her hair.

"Why, no, I suppose not. We were discussing the women at the Governor's reception and expressing our opinions. You must have a

white silk at once, and you can wear my pearls, and of course you are to go with me," continued the anxious chaperon, bustling to depart. "I'll go straight to your father's office and then come back for you, and we will go get the dress without any delay."

In giving directions to the leading modiste, Janet felt her importance increasing, and on the looked-for evening, when she was driven off in state to the brilliantly lighted rooms, she was sure nobody else could be so happy. The odor of the flowers, the swaying rhythm of intoxicating music, the beautiful faces, the voices of friends, all combined to make her forget that she had ever been other than now, a débutante, a belle, whose card was full, whose admirers surrounded her between the dances.

She was so much sought for that her aunt had to wait very patiently, and with a queer little smile at the corners of her mouth, before she could bring another friend to introduce him. This charge was a stalwart, grave-look-

ing man with deep-set eyes and a heavy, dark mustache.

"The most superb figure I ever saw," murmured Miss Wriggles to her small, lean partner.

"Ya-as," drawled the dainty youth; "I never saw a fellow improve so wonderfully as he has done. When he first came here from the country, some awful place nobody ever heard of, with people in it nobody ever knew, why, he was dreadful, you know, but as soon as he speculated and began to make money, he grew to be very handsome, haw-haw!" with which withering wit Mr. Cruikshanks retired in favor of someone else.

Meanwhile Janet was trying to make room for Mr. Fairfield beside her.

"I have had the honor of meeting you before, Miss Morgan," he said, looking into her eyes with ill-concealed admiration.

Janet hesitated a moment and then replied, frankly: "No, Mr. Fairfield, you have made a mistake. I have never met you before."

There was a tinge of regret in her voice, for after all, this great, honest-eyed man, with his rich voice, had asked to meet her as some other woman.

"No," he answered, lowering his tone a little, seeing the diminutive Cruikshanks straining his ears to catch the drift of the conversation; "I met you at your home in Mecklenberg county, when you were a little girl in a red cloak and a sunbonnet making preserves under a pear tree and I was deputy sheriff."

Janet scanned his face with the innocent gaze of childish curiosity and astonishment.

"Oh, yes, I remember you now, only——" She hesitated.

"Only it is my feathers," he supplemented. "You see my memory is better than yours, and I remember you perfectly, even though you wore that bonnet which hid your hair. I will confess, however, that I have been watching you grow for five years, ever since you returned from that place."

"How queer to watch me grow," she

laughed. "Have I seemed to get on very rapidly? Now, I'll make a confession, too, for I have always felt guilty about that deputy sheriff, although I would do the same again. Do you know while you were standing under that tree, talking to Uncle John, that Tom was down in the pines at the back of the house, and I knew he was there?"

And then she told how it had happened. The baby was ill during the night, and she was sent to Dinah's cabin for help. As she ran hurriedly down the path in the moonlight she heard Tom's voice from behind a tree, where he had been crouching. "Miss Janet," he whispered, "don't you holler. It's me, and I is runnin' 'way ter keep 'em from puttin' de law 'pon top me. Don't you tell nobody you see me, 'cause dey kill me sho if dey cotch me. I gwine ter stay in de pines all day to-morrow, b'low de branch, and at night I kin run off befo' de moon rises."

Janet promised silence, trembling with fright, and at noon the next day she took him

some food, under cover of hunting for a lost turkey.

"I knew you wouldn't let yo' po' nigger starve," he said, gratefully, devouring the corn pone and baked apples with which she had piled the plate for the turkeys, and then she had gone back to the house, a very scared and miserable child.

"That was an event in my childhood," she added. "Tell me, was it very wrong in me to cheat the law and harbor criminals?" looking up mischievously. "Am I very wicked?"

"No,' he answered gravely. "You are just as God made you—perfect."

* * * * * * *

The day after the most brilliant wedding of the season, Aunt Alice sat in a pile of newspapers and boxes, superintending the packing of cut glass and china, while Miss Wriggles hovered around, still in a state of romantic excitement.

"It is the most sentimental thing I ever heard," she said. "To think of Sam Fairfield

loving Janet from afar all these years and waiting to get rich before he courted her."

"Yes, it is all lovely," Aunt Alice said sweetly, and then thought: "Romance indeed! What would it all have come to but for me, for as soon as he said he liked red hair I dragged her to that ball. I would like to know what girls would do without sensible relatives."

Bob's Trip Abroad

LAST night, as we sat around Bob's fire, looking over some magazines, he remarked, casually: "That is a very good cut of the Crystal Palace."

"What do you know about it?" asked Harman.

"Didn't you know I was over last month?" he replied, a look of great depression stealing over his face. In fact, he has not appeared like himself for several weeks, but we did not like to question him. He is secretary and stenographer for Mr. Minor King, who rushes him about the country at a great rate, not giving him time to breathe, but we had not missed him for any great while recently and could hardly credit his statement. All of us knew his great longing for Europe, that he had lived in uncomfortable lodgings for years and denied him-

self many things with that end in view, and that he was only waiting for three months' leave of absence from Mr. King.

"Say, Bob, when were you over?" continued Harman, with a dubious smile.

"A few weeks ago, when you thought I was in New York. You must know that Mr. King is one of those very important people who, having the advantage of many millions, never condescend to tell a fellow when he is expected to go with him until the last moment. He came into the office here one afternoon at four o'clock and told me to be ready to catch the Eastern train at five. I rushed home and threw a few things in my bag, didn't have time to get my overcoat from Brown, who had borrowed it the day before, and was at the station in time. It would have meant the loss of my place had I made any inquiries about the journey, but, knowing what he had on hand, I was quite sure we would land in New York to see about those Nevada mining stocks.

"We were there several days, with an im-

mense amount of work, and not one moment I could call my own, when, one day, while I was in the midst of a long cipher message, he remarked, casually, while he was jotting down some memoranda, 'I've engaged a couple of staterooms for to-night to Liverpool. I suppose you can get ready."

It was hard work to hold up my lower jaw, but I was determined not to be outdone in indifference, so I drawled out, 'Ya-as, I guess so,' as if I had spent most of my life on the ocean wave. Then, when he went out of the office, I up and knocked over a chair or two, slapped the janitor on the back and hugged a messenger boy, who fled from 'the crazy man' as fast as he could.

"Tearing down the street, I purchased a rug and cap and found I had just time to get to the wharf. Mr. King was growing impatient, but smoothed down when he saw me coming.

"I had time to watch a parting between mother and daughter, the prettiest girl you ever saw, brown eyes and tall, you know, just

my style. The father was crossing with her, and mamma was remaining on shore.

" 'Do take good care of papa, Grace,' mamma was saying, and Grace linked her arm affectionately in his and gave him a melting look from her lovely eyes that I would have died for. Never before had I wished to be a father. She threw me a sidelong glance which, I thought, took in my good points, and then turned to kiss her mother. Oh! how I longed to be a mother!

"As soon as we were out of sight of land, and everything was getting quiet on board, I took out my cherished rug, my comfortable cap, and secured a chair near my divinity on deck. It was an exquisite evening, a silver moon and all that, and for fully five minutes my happiness was complete; then Mr. King appeared and, thanking me for my forethought in having provided for his comfort, took possession of my rug, and I had to creep back to the cabin, a sadder and a colder man, for the wind was icy.

"The next morning I was dead to the world,

and I remained in my berth nearly all the way over; but when I did creep out Grace was interested and gave me a sympathetic glance, which comforts me even now. She never spoke one word to me, except to thank me for removing chairs and things that I had purposely placed in her path; but she did drop her handkerchief, which she will never get back. The morning we reached Liverpool she distinctly told me good-by with her eyes as she stepped on the gangway.

"I lost her then and thought I had left her behind me forever, with the shrieking cabbies and the crowded teams, when what was my joy in London, not many hours later, upon entering the Compton, to see her sitting quietly in the reception room unbuttoning her gloves and looking very sleepy and tired. We both smiled involuntarily, and at that moment her father came in, and she followed him to the lift. It was enough to know that the same roof sheltered us, and my state of bliss can be imagined.

"The next day I opened my eyes to the realization of London and Grace. We had a meeting of the stockholders at ten, and after that some cipher messages which kept me until luncheon. When Mr. King ceased dictating he said he was going out of town to Lord Gresham's and would dine there. 'We will take the early train for Liverpool in the morning so as to catch the boat back home,' he added, as he turned to the door.

"Words could never describe my despair. To leave now, when I had not seen one single thing, and to leave those brown eyes and the happy smile on the opposite side of three thousand miles of water. In a sort of frenzy I finished my work, seized my hat and rushed out into the street, knocking over people, taking the wrong cars and flying from one place to another in my mad desire to see something. The clerk at the hotel told me where to catch a train for Sydenham, to see the Crystal Palace, but I had only time to look at it from the outside. A little later I found myself on the top

of a 'bus shrieking in a woman's ear, 'What is that?' 'Westminster Abbey,' she answered, stolidly. Again I pointed and yelled, 'What is that building?' 'Westminster Abbey,' she replied, as before, and I found she had adopted this answer for all inquiries to save herself trouble.

" 'What church is that, little boy?' I asked a youngster on a tram. 'Saint Paul's,' he answered, and the night fell upon me, with the rush of vehicles, the beggars, the thousands of glittering lights, the rain in soaking mistiness and the sickening thought that this was the end of my trip abroad.

"I went to one or two theatres and jingled the pitiful coins in my pocket, trying to make up my mind to stay for three months and let Mr. King come home without a secretary, but the thought of no work and the meanness of the thing to leave him in the lurch like that, kept my head clear, and early next morning we left the hotel together.

"The station was crowded, of course, and I

noticed a man in our compartment but did not observe him particularly, for we were late and just in time to be hustled in by the guard, when off we started, and there stood Grace on the platform waving her hand at me. I had not had time to put down my umbrella in the rush, so I shook it at her as hard as my heart was trembling. In an instant she was out of sight, and I found I had run the handle into the man beside me, who was swearing deeply. I turned to apologize and saw it was her father. He came back on the boat with us and left her at school.

"Yes, boys, I've been abroad."

We shook hands with him silently and left him still looking at the magazine.

The Embodiment of a Thought

It was raining, snowing and sleeting alternately. Our horses stumbled and slipped through mud up to the hubs, and the driver was evidently intoxicated. Finally he ran into a bank and one of the wheels collapsed, leaving me perched on the high but not dry side of the debilitated vehicle. The horses stopped, glad of a reprieve from pulling through the mud; the driver decided to unharness them in some dim future and lead them to town, so I had to get out and make my way alone.

It was very dark, and, in trying to find the driest side of the road, I stumbled against a shambling gate. Into this I turned, hoping to find a shelter nearer than the town, which was several miles further. My effort was soon rewarded by seeing a twinkling light not very far from me. Following this hope, I stumbled on

through the dripping darkness until I walked against another gate, and then, threading my way through a maze of forest oaks, I at last reached the house and knocked.

The sound of children's voices and the rattle of an old piano were as sweetest music to my frost-nipped ears, and something, I cannot describe what, told me I had come there to stay.

In another moment the door was opened and the sweetest of voices asked me in. I stepped from the cold, unfriendly darkness into the warmth and glow of the family fireside, and I can close my eyes now and see the picture of the old, square hall, furnished like a sitting-room with high-backed mahogany chairs, a square piano, a huge rosewood desk, reaching nearly to the top of the whitewashed walls, and several curious cabinets of quaint shape. French prints in peeling gilt frames and some old oils in dark moldings were hung high around the room, and an old Dutch clock, with red and blue tulips on its gaudy face, creaked and

clanged in the corner. A pair of heavy brass candlesticks and an antique vase ornamented the high mantel, and around the huge open fireplace, piled with glowing logs, sat the family.

A swarm of children ceased to speak when I entered, and stared at me. A beautiful woman of fifty was reading aloud to a man who, with paralyzed limbs, sat in his invalid chair and scowled upon the world.

The children effaced themselves, my hostess laid down her book and greeted me kindly, while the father looked at me searchingly from under his heavy brows. The owner of the sweet voice, after closing the door, came forward and stirred the fire, then seated herself opposite me upon an ottoman with a faded tapestry cover. She was tall and slight, very plainly dressed and her hands, though slender and graceful, bore the marks of housework and needle pricks; but when the light fell upon her face with its exquisite oval shape and lustrous eyes, I looked into the fire lest my interest in her beauty might embarrass her.

I stated my forlorn plight to the mother and asked if she would shelter me for the night. She replied courteously that she was afraid she could not make me comfortable, all of her best rooms being occupied.

Here the vision on the ottoman said: "Mamma, we have Miss Shelton's room. Perhaps he might not mind a haunted room." She questioned me with her eyes.

"If it is only a question of a ghost," I replied, "I beg you will allow me to remain. I have come to the county upon a little business for Killiams & Know, in Richmond; in fact, to see a client of theirs—Dr. Mainright—and if you will let me stay until morning I will be very grateful."

If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst my words could not have produced a greater effect.

"I am Dr. Mainright," answered the gruff voice from the invalid chair.

Mother and daughter looked at each other with blanched faces and clasped hands, while I

sat there longing for an earthquake to swallow me. Death in any form from lightning to yellow fever would be a relief. I had dreaded this errand enough before, with these terrible papers in my pocket to be served upon some unhappy unknowns who were to be put out of their home; but now to sit by their hearthstone looking first at the wreck in the chair, then at the tired face of the mother and the lovely creature on the faded ottoman, and to think of my driving them out into the pitiless storm of a wintry life!

"I regret very much being the bearer of anything disagreeable," I stammered.

"We will not discuss business matters tonight, sir," he said, with a peremptory wave of his tremulous hand. "Mary, tell Sam to make a fire in Mr. Burton's room." This was addressed to the vision, who went out for a few minutes and returned with a lighted candle in one hand and a little streak of soot on the other, from which I judged that Sam was sound asleep.

"In what manner am I to be visited by the ghost?" I inquired, taking up my candle.

"Oh, she does not harm you," laughed the girl. "She will only walk in and look at you. You see, she walks about the house because she committed suicide here. She was a kleptomaniac and used to get into a great deal of trouble. She finally took a large sum of money from my grandfather's desk, or it was supposed that she did, and when he accused her of it she took laudanum and died in the room you are to occupy."

My hostess opened a door leading into a narrow passage and pointed to some rather steep steps.

"When you reach the landing, turn to the left and you will find your door ajar," she said, and bade me good night.

I found the way without difficulty, for the house was not large. The room was comfortably but gloomily furnished with heavy mahogany, a faded velvet carpet with large red roses on it the size of cabbages, and some old

prints of Washington and Jefferson, in oval frames. A bust of Henry Clay, with his long upper lip, looked at me severely from his position over the door. In one corner there was a very narrow enclosed staircase running down into the room and the door of this was covered by a crimson curtain. Below this door there were two steps projecting, upon one of which stood a tin water pail.

The fire, though newly made, was burning brightly, and as I drew my chair nearer its hospitable blaze, I congratulated myself upon having found such a comfortable spot, even under such depressing circumstances. What would become of these people when they no longer had the shelter of this roof? Killiams & Know were inexorable. The notes were long overdue and I but the unwilling tool to do their bidding.

The house was perfectly quiet save for the occasional scurry of a rat across the garret floor and the rattling of the cracked panes in the shaking windows. At intervals the swish

of a sleet-laden bough would brush against the half-open blind and cause me to stir the fire. Something, I know not what, made me look over my shoulder at the garret door, and as I looked the crimson curtain slowly moved. I examined it nervously and found that the wind through a large crack was lifting the drapery. The door was locked with the key on my side, but there was something about it that worried me. Browning's lines refused to leave my mind:

"And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret stairs
And the locks slip unawares."

Every one of these sounds occurred in that room before I went to sleep, and always when I started at any unusual noise I looked askance at the garret door.

I must have slept several hours, for the fire

had burned down to a few embers, when I was aroused by the consciousness of another's presence. There was enough light to distinguish each object about me in a sort of grayness, and I peered around me a moment, then closed my eyes. When I opened them again a woman stood by my bed, very close to me and looking straight down into my soul. I put out my hand to touch her, feeling assured she was a human being, but an indefinable sensation of repulsion made me withdraw it. I could not see the color of her eyes or the material of her garment, but she was tall and straight and came yet nearer to me, while I lay horrified yet fascinated by her movements. She turned slowly and pointed to the garret steps; and then, thoroughly unnerved, I covered up my head and broke into a cold perspiration. While I lay there trembling I decided that I had had a nightmare, but there was no more sleep for me that night. All my studies in the psychic society to which I belonged only served to make me draw the coverlet more closely over my head while I lis-

tened to the muffled rattling of something underneath the little steps, a little clinking—a scurry—a swish, and then a dreadful stillness.

At breakfast the next morning there was a group of serious faces; but a smile was exchanged between the older members of the family when I related my nightmare of the ghost.

"Why, that is the way Miss Shelton always comes," explained Mary, "and everyone who sleeps in the room has the same nightmare.

After the meal was over I had an interview with Dr. Mainright and we discussed his hopeless affairs. The house must go. My sympathy was so thoroughly aroused and my desire to solve Miss Shelton's presence so great, as well as the interest I felt in a certain dimple in Mary's left cheek, that I begged him to let me remain a few days in his home until we could make some plan for his comfort. I then wired to Killiams & Know that I had sprained an ankle, and went to walk with the dimple.

Having given some study to thought forces, it occurred to me to treat Miss Shelton scien-

tifically and in a perfectly fair manner. She had evidently died with some thought on her mind unexpressed, which she wished to convey to someone. After death the thought, of course, remained in the room, and could be translated to the persons concerned by somebody gifted with psychic understanding. No scientific discovery, however, would have given me the courage to receive a second visit from her, and nothing but the hope of recovering something to aid the wrecked fortunes of this distressed family would have induced me to occupy the room again.

As the time to retire approached my spirits fell. I blew out and relighted my lamp several times, finally leaving it well turned up, and went to bed repeating to myself an idea culled from a recent work. "A ghost is the embodiment of a thought, visible only to persons of a certain temperament." This I kept up my courage with until I dreamt of the whittled bench at school and "A noun is the name of any person, place or thing."

How long I slept I do not know, but my first consciousness told me Miss Shelton was there. The curtain across the door moved slightly, the light flickered and went out, seemingly by the passing of ghostly garments, and I shut my eyes, dreading to see what I knew was there, when, horror of horrors, something —God knows what—gently pulled the coverlet down from my shoulders and blew an icy breath against my cheek. By a violent effort I forced myself to look up, and there the same gray figure of the woman stood staring down into my face. The room was not dark, for the moonlight fell through the blinds in silvery bars across the floor, revealing her straight figure in its clinging gown, whiile the massive old mahogany made a black background for her misty presence. All my psychological lessons, learned in lighted libraries with mocking companions, fled from my palsied brain, and there I lay, a trembling coward, before this thing standing at my side—this awful embodiment.

She turned as she had done the previous

night and pointed to the garret steps, then slowly faded from my sight.

It was some time after her departure before I recovered my nerves sufficiently to get up and make a light. Taking my pocket knife and the poker, I began the tedious task of loosening the woodwork at the foot of the little door. The top of the lower step was not as secure as it should have been, and when I removed it, there before me lay a musty, dusty heap of gold, silver and odd pieces of old-fashioned jewelry. A heavy watch chain was caught on a projecting nail against a rough board, and this the rats had brushed against in their random skirmishes. Greedily I counted the little pile of money and found more than enough to satisfy the mortgage. It all ended very happily, and Mary sits opposite my fireside now, with our children playing about her; but as I write, the old horror comes over me and I too clearly recall that dreadful presence. I can feel the cold breath on my cheek and hear the swish of the ghostly garments.

Mrs. Brown

THE partition was so thin and the voices, though modulated, were so distinct, it would have been impossible not to have heard them talking; and being an old woman and a lonely one, I own that I put my chair a little closer to the thin planks which divided their room from mine, for I was loved once in my youth, and the mellow bass notes from a masculine throat brought back a part of myself long buried.

They were living in our Western boarding house, not an elegant or refined establishment by any means, nor one calculated to attract people of their evident station; but he seemed oblivious of everything save her presence, and she was so entirely in the clouds that I really believe she did not know the name of any one at the table for a month after she came; still, there was about her such a halo of fascination

(if one might use such an expression) that we watched for her to come in, and when she left the room the light went with her.

They never sat in the common sitting-room and looked at the album or examined the hanging photographs of the landlady's dead children, whose features and virtues were enlarged upon abnormally. They never perched upon the edge of the sunken cane rocking chairs and played cards on the palsied table with the other boarders, but they did not ignore us. On the contrary they beamed upon us, a motley set of bread-winners, fortune-hunters and land-boomers, but they were too absorbed to bestow their time upon us.

They never had any mail and took no interest in the startling growth of the town, although they had come to live. He had a clerkship in the Drop Game mine, and she took long walks alone and sketched when he was at work, always going to meet him late in the afternoon, when they would saunter home together with the sunset glow in their faces.

How could I help listening to the sounds from the other side of the wall, for there was never a cross word, and happiness is sometimes catching!

Their bright conversation was cheerful, and his bantering wit, with her ever-ready retort, became a source of pleasure to me. They read aloud a great deal, and sometimes he would leave Ruskin and Carlyle and launch suddenly into a medical journal, and several times I heard her distinctly call him "Doctor." Afterward there would be a pause, a dead silence, as if their eyes had finished the sentence.

She was not a beautiful woman, but there was something about her which made her more than that—a superiority of mind with a gentleness of manner and a tenderness of touch when she shook hands that made one conscious of her sympathy.

He was handsome, decidedly, having a fine figure of generous proportions, a pair of laughing blue eyes and a crop of flaxen ringlets, a

man and boy at once, perhaps his parentage a faun and a fay, but why those scientific hands, so firm and slender, so squared at the finger-tips?

One day a new boarder sat next her at table. When she entered and saw him, she paused momentarily and hesitated before taking her seat. She exchanged a glance with her husband, and when they were introduced as Mr. and Mrs. Brown the stranger held his baked beans on his balanced knife for fully a minute and was too surprised or too rude to bow.

After a few moments he seemed to regain his normal condition and attacked his food.

On the way upstairs I heard Mrs. Brown say, "It was the grocer," in an awed tone.

"Never mind, dear, those things are apt to happen," he responded, lightly.

In just ten days from that time a letter was handed her at table. This was so remarkable that all of us noticed it, for if they ever had any mail it was not sent to the house. She glanced at the address and grew very pale. Mr. Brown

took it from her and put it in his pocket, saying she would drop it from her lap.

After that they never looked the same. Her color left her and the light died out of her eyes. He was nervous and restless, and instead of the gay laughter on the other side of the partition, there would be long silences and sometimes a sigh. One night I heard her sob and felt rather than heard him try to comfort her.

The next day she was ill and sent for me to come to her room.

She really looked dreadfully, with great circles under her eyes from excessive weeping, and when she put out her dear little hand I found it like a burning coal.

"I feel like talking to a woman," she said, "and I thought you would not mind coming in. You have such a motherly look."

She told me Mr. Brown had been called out of town on business, and she was not sure when he would return; in fact, if he were successful he would not come back at all—she would join him.

She remained in bed several days, and as I sat with her all the time whenever she was awake, we grew quite friendly.

Our conversations were rarely of a personal nature, and I never heard her allude to any of her family.

One day when she had been particularly depressed, she looked in my fact very wistfully and said: "I'm going to tell you a story about some people I once knew, and you must express your opinion. The girl went to live in the family of a doctor whose wife had the opium habit; to be a sort of companion to her and to stand between a curious public and this misfortune. It ended by her falling in love with the man. She tried in every way to crush it out of her heart, but was too weak to do it, and finally consented to go away with him, so they disappeared.

"They were very happy at first, in spite of the horror of it all. He wanted to get a divorce and marry her, but she, having been a Christian, felt that would only add to and not con-

done the crime, for man's laws cannot alter God's.

"At this juncture their address was discovered, for they were living far from home under an assumed name, and the wife wrote her begging her to send him home, and saying she would receive him with open arms."

"What did she do?" I asked breathlessly.

"She sent him," was the faint response, and then she turned her face to the wall and wept bitterly.

"Never mind, my dear," I said. "She tried to do right, and she'll be happier in the end."

The next day, in spite of her weakness, she insisted upon leaving us to go to Mr. Brown in Chicago, but the station agent told me afterward that she took a train in the opposite direction.

A week or two later my eye fell upon the following paragraph in a Boston paper:

"We are glad to state that the recent stories concerning Dr. Jasper Le Roy have been entirely erroneous. He has returned home and

explained satisfactorily his absence, which was prolonged by an illness in Chicago. Mrs. Le Roy was sent for, and they have returned to this city."

Miss Scruggs

WHEN a harness maker appeared at the Court House, with his wardrobe and his tools in a bundle slung over his shoulders, we met with open arms and every kind of a broken bridle known to man or beast.

All the old leather was dug out of the débris in the harness room, every old saddle in the neighborhood was brought forth, and such was the gratitude of the public for having this blessing bestowed upon the town, that the City Council held a meeting and agreed unanimously to give him a small house, rent free, picturesquely situated on the railroad track, and several other inducements were held out to tempt him to remain.

He was a very courteous elderly man, whose gentle manners impressed us all favorably, and

there was a suggestion in his benevolent smile and good grammar of a happier and broader sphere of action than that of mending harness in a five-by-ten shop.

It was not very long before he decided to find a housekeeper, and one day he took a little trip to a neighboring town, returning in the evening with a slim lassie, who brought with her a pair of bold black eyes and a young baby in her arms.

After her arrival the house began to assume the aspect of a home. Some gay hollyhocks flaunted their crimson frills at the passing trains; the pump handle was mended and painted blue; a ragged curtain made of a discarded muslin suggestive of something feminine and dainty hung over the one front window; a wreath of smoke curled skyward from the rock chimney; the baby laughed and wailed alternately in its little goods box cradle, and altogether there was a nestful if not a restful sensation upon entering his abode that Mr. Julesby seemed to appreciate.

His happiness shed its rays up and down the track as he walked to his work, with a smile on his worn, wrinkled features, and really he was a picture of contentment.

The girl was very quiet when she first came, rarely stirring out of the house, but as Mr. Julesby's trade increased, and the baby likewise, so it could toddle by her side, she invested in a large red hat which she wore tilted to one side, a pair of high-heeled shoes (also worn on the side) and an overskirt much befrilled and coquettishly draped.

Soon it was reported that she was Mrs. Julesby and had been for some time. He spoke of her as his wife, and the butcher's wife called upon her; so it ran thus for several years.

The hollyhocks spread, the little house began to assume a jaunty, trim air, with a tiny porch built in front; the cradle was split for dry wood one cold night, the child played on the track and rolled down the embankment in front of every train, and had to be shrieked at and hauled off in the nick of time (it is aston-

ishing how many nicks time has for a small boy to escape through), and everything at the Julesby's seemed to be in a state of domestic contentment, when one day a sewing machine man came to sell his wares.

He had a very long mustache, a rolling eye, a dissipated nose, wore a diamond stud in his shirt front and had a good trotting horse hitched to his light wagon.

He paid quite a long call, and when he started away Mrs. Julesby went out to the gate with him and patted the horse, giving it the apple little Joe was crying for, and then she leaned over the fence and watched the visitor disappear down the dusty road.

The next day the horse came by for another apple, bringing his master with him, and this occurred several times.

One afternoon Mr. Julesby came home unexpectedly from the shop and found the man lunching off the cold chicken he had put away in the cupboard for his supper.

This was a blow, but he bore it philosophic-

ally, for Mrs. Julesby promised him a pie for next day.

When the morrow came the pie came not with it, and sorrow was added to the old man's lot when he slowly walked up the track, climbed up the steep steps in the bank and opened the door of his little home.

The fire had gone out, Joe was not there, Mrs. Julesby's presence was not felt, and the supper table, usually laid at this hour, was pushed up against the wall, with the blue canton flannel cover on it and the album in place.

Everything was still except the cow at the back door, who was trying to come in and was lowing aggrievedly to be milked.

He looked around vacantly for a moment; then his eye fell upon a piece of brown paper, folded and stuck in the side of the bed with a large brass pin.

He opened it hastily and read:

"I have gone. You need not look for me. His horse is too fast for you.

"MISS SCRUGGS."

Mr. Julesby pulled his beard savagely and sat down; then he squinted up one eye and shook his fist at the tin dipper hanging on the wall.

After a few moments' thought he left the house and followed the main road, where there was a fresh wagon track from his gate. On it went for a mile and then it turned into a skirt of woods which led to a deserted saw mill.

Presently he found the vehicle standing in the road, and heard voices on the other side of a large pile of fallen wood.

Slowly he crept through the rustling twigs and, having found a spot behind an uprooted tree where he could see without being seen, listened and looked.

Miss Scruggs was seated on a log by the machine man, while little Joe was tugging at her skirts and begging her to go home. They were too absorbed to pay much attention to his importunities, though he seemed to be the subject of their remarks.

"Why, I hadn't the slightest idea of taking

the kid," the man was saying, looking over poor little Joe's points with great disfavor. "What do you suppose I could do with him?"

"Understood you to say that anyhow," she answered, doggedly, as if she had settled the matter and intended having her family participate in the elopement.

"Well, to tell you the truth," he said, "I was only joking about your coming. I have nowhere to take you to, and I thought you knew I was only in fun."

He hesitated a little and looked sheepishly at the large bundle she had carefully tied and brought with her, but which had become a little awry in the journey in the wagon, and now through the torn places in the newspaper covering, Joe's small, patched garments were protruding.

"What made you come after me then and bring me this far?" She asked the question with a very hard look on her young face. "You ought not to behave thataway, and I am just going, anyhow."

"Well, I guess not," was the reply, and rising as he spoke he went over to where his horse was standing. "Tra-la," he called, and with a spring he had jumped in the wagon and was gone before she could remonstrate further.

Yes, he was gone, and she was alone in the woods at dusk, homeless, friendless, penniless, with the child crying for supper and the owls hooting at her through the misty glades.

A rustling noise in the forest behind her satrtled her in her dumb misery.

The boy crept closer to her. She shook him roughly. "It was all on account of you," she said, impatiently. "I wish I'd have left you with Mr. Julesby."

At that moment the old man, who had been making his way slowly toward her, now held out his hands to the child, who gave a sob of relief and threw his arms around his neck.

When he had soothed the boy, he turned to the woman and made her a low bow.

"Miss Scruggs," he said, "I left the cow

waiting to be milked, and when I engage a housekeeper I expect her to stay at home and prepare my food."

She looked at his old, wrinkled face and at the gentle way he held Joe in his tired arms, and then, picking up her newspaper bundle, she followed them.

Her romance was over, and in a vague way she felt that he understood and that he knew it all.

Of one thing she felt quite certain, and that was the butcher's wife would never call her Mrs. Julesby again. She would now be Miss Scruggs for life.

Aunt Sallie's Psychology

"I HAVE come to the conclusion," said Madge, throwing aside her wraps and drawing her chair nearer to the blazing logs, "that it really does not matter whether we have any bodies at all. Our minds are all that are necessary for our well-being in the world, and I am going to practice all the theories this lecturer advances. You will see a remarkable change in this household, Aunt Sallie; I am going to will people to do everything I wish."

"Yes," chimed in Ada, "you can really make everyone obey you by simply sending out a thought force and compelling them to follow your thought. Professor Wise explained it all very clearly. It is like Mark Twain's man."

Aunt Sallie put aside her farming paper, and pushed back her spectacles.

"I don't believe any of it. It is all nonsense.

Didn't Pete tell me last week how to make the mink stop killing my chickens? He told me to take four black bottles and hang one in each corner of the hen house by a pink string, and the mink would never come back. I did just as he directed, and the next morning two more chickens were gone. No, I pay no attention to anything like that now. It's all foolishness."

"But this has nothing to do with a mink, dearest Auntie," remonstrated Madge, with uplifted brows and a little bored expression at the corners of her mouth. "This is the influence of mind upon mind. For instance, if I want a certain person to do a certain thing, I write him a note and pin it over my heart, let it stay there, and he will answer it just as if he had received it through the mail."

"I'm going to will Hugh Powers to send me a five-pound box of bonbons; I'm dying for some candy," said Ada.

"That will be no test, for you know he is liable to do that at any moment."

"But I'll not take any chances on it. We

will write them now while our thought forces are strong," she continued, seating herself at the old desk in the corner. "Here it is: 'I will you, Hugh Powers, to send me a five-pound box of bonbons, December the twenty-fourth. Ada.' Now, Madge, write yours, and we will pin them in, sealed and directed."

"Mine is going to be more private than that," answered Madge, two round spots of color flaring up high on her cheeks. "I've no idea of showing it." She wrote hastily, then carefully concealed it in the bosom of her gown. That night she tossed upon her pillow, pondering over what would happen if it were responded to, or, worse still, if he should ever find out she wrote such a thing. "I will you, Jack Harcourt, to cease your attentions to Mildred Forse and to return to me on the twenty-fourth of December. Madge." There it lay against her heart, like a leaden weight. She felt as if she had posted it, and she could see him reading it with a scornful smile; and then flinging it in the waste basket. On the other hand, how was

it possible for him to find it out? If there were reason in this thing he would return to her without knowing what guided his footsteps, and it was so perfectly dreadful to see him driving Mildred by, flaunting her in her face, so to speak. Of course she had refused to marry him, but that was nothing. She could not marry all the men who asked her, and most of them came back after a little. But Jack was different from the others, and she did not know she loved him until this girl had come with her picture hats and stunning gowns, to dazzle him. He was not the right sort of man; he must be both fickle and mean, and she hated him, yes, hated him, but she left the little note rising and falling upon her breast as she sobbed herself to sleep.

The next week was spent in preparation for the Christmas party. "Madge has been working too hard, Aunt," said Ada; "she is too thin by far." The old lady looked critically at some dark shadows beneath the blue eyes, which betokened tears. "Yes, child," she said,

"you do look a little peaked. You are not sleeping enough; too many boys here every evening. When I was young, girls didn't do that way, going out to all sorts of curious lectures and science things, studying about the astral fluid and useless nonsense, and then staying up half the night dancing and playing cards." Then she thought, "Yes, poor child, she is sorry now she sent away Jack, and here he is tearing by here every day with that strange girl, without ever glancing at the house. I'll have to invite her to the party, because she is staying with Melinda, but I hope she will not come." She sighed as her thoughts traveled backward over forty years, and, skipping a peaceful period of married life, she could recall, with painful distinctness, a certain summer of her girlhood and the very gowns that hated boarder wore at her mother's farmhouse. The odor of violets had made her ill for years afterward, for had not that woman worn them? And there was a certain way she had of pushing far out

from under her silken skirt a very well-fitting boot that enraged her now whenever she thought of it, and although the grave had closed over the husband's faithful form a long time ago, and the boarder had married a foreigner, the thought still rankled.

The night of the party was clear and beautiful, and all the county came. There were horses tied to every tree in the grove, and up and down the village streets the sleigh-bells were jingling with their merry loads. Miss Forse came attired in a gown whose beauty mystified the populace, and was escorted by Jack Harcourt. In speaking to Madge he said as little as courtesy demanded, for this was the first time since his cold dismissal that he had been near her. He did not glance at the pretty pink creation which she had spent weeks in planning, or even notice that she was pale. She really could not give him a waltz, she said, with great indifference; her card was so crowded; yes, it was a beautiful night—glad he thought the decorations

were tasteful, they had done it themselves, with Basil Truman's assistance.

This name had a peculiarly unhappy effect upon Jack and caused him to turn his eyes upon the graceful figure in the bewildering gown skimming lightly past him.

Aunt Sallie went upstairs during the evening, looking for someone, and there on the table in Ada's room, lay a box of bonbons with a card.—"Well, in all my life!" she ejaculated, then she peeped in the mirror to see if her lace collar was properly adjusted and turned to the door. On the floor before her was a small envelope. Taking it up, she read the address,

"Mr. John Harcourt,
"In the World of Thought."

She twirled the rumpled little missive over and over in her hands while she pondered deeply. Then closing the door, she knelt behind it, forgetful of her best black silk. "Lord," she prayed, "help me to adjust this

L. of C.

matter, and if I get Madge into deeper waters, please pull her out."

When she returned to the ball-room Miss Forse and Jack whirled past; the music ceased suddenly, and they took their seats. She walked by them slowly, and in the crowd it was not noticed that an envelope seemed to flake from her capacious person and fall upon the floor at Jack's feet. A few minutes later she saw him approach Madge, who was standing near. "I've just received your note," he said brusquely, "and I want to know what it means. Is it some prank to torture me?"

"What do you mean?" gasped the girl, clutching involuntarily the laces on her bodice.

"I mean this," he replied, taking from his pocket the dingy little note.

Poor Madge gave a violent start. "I must have dropped it—the pin came out. It was not intended for you, Mr. Harcourt,' she said, choking with mortification. "It was a joke, you know, and I did it to test a theory after hearing the lecture."

"Then, joke or no joke, I intend to take it in earnest," he replied, in a most masterful tone.

Just then there was a cry from several throats, and Aunt Sallie fell in a limp heap upon the floor, her lace collar all awry and her black silk twisted about her feet. It was never decided by the doctors whether it was a slight stroke of apoplexy or an ordinary fainting spell, but she had to be carried to her room and many restoratives used before she regained consciousness. By the next morning, however, she was at the breakfast table as usual.

"There, Aunt," said Ada, "my experiment has proved a success. Hugh sent the candy. How has yours turned out, Madge?"

"Mine is all right, too, but I am not so sure it was a psychological demonstration. I can't make it quite clear to you, but it is as I wished it to be." Here she reddened a little and looked with unusual interest at her plate.

Aunt Sallie noted the changed countenance

and smiled to herself. "I don't know but what you girls may be right after all," said the wily old woman, "and I'm going to put some more bottles in the hen house."

THE END.

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